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Deliberative Transformative Moments: A New Concept as Amendment to the Discourse Quality Index

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Abstract

Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM) is a new concept that serves as an amendment to the DQI. With this new concept it is easier to get at the quick give-and-take of discussions of small groups of ordinary citizens. As an illustration, we apply the concept to discussions about the peace process among Colombian ex-combatants, ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries. Specifically, we show how personal stories can transform a discussion from a low to a high level of deliberation and how they can have the opposite effect. To increase the level of deliberation in the general population, we recommend that good illustrations of DTM's should be part of the school programs from an early age on, so that children learn how to discuss with others who have different opinions and values.

Keywords

deliberative dynamic, Colombia, personal stories

In our wider research group, we have developed the Discourse Quality Index (DQI), which we consider still as useful for many purposes (Steiner et al., 2005, Steiner, 2012a). As Beste (2013) shows in his review article in this journal, it is indeed widely used. But when it comes to quick give-and-takes in small group discussions, the DQI has its shortcomings, which we attempt to remedy with the concept of *Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM).* This concept shall not replace but amend the DQI. The main purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how we conceptualize the DTM. As a secondary purpose, we will show how this concept can be used in practical empirical research. As an illustration, we will use small group discussions of Colombian ex-combatants about possible ways to build peace in their country.

Why has the DQI had problems being applied to small group discussions? Let us first describe how the DQI works. It measures the various deliberative dimensions. The units of analysis are the individual speech acts, by which we mean particular interventions of an actor in a discussion. Each speech act is coded according to given categories for each dimension. One dimension is how well arguments are justified. The coding categories refer to how well reasons and conclusions are linked. Personal stories also count as good justifications as long as they are linked to the issue under discussion. A second dimension refers to the respect that is paid to other actors and the arguments they present. A third dimension asks to what extent arguments are justified in terms of the public good. A fourth dimension has to do with the outcome of a group discussion; from a deliberative perspective, consensus is a good outcome, but it may be good enough if the actors acknowledge that the other side also has valid arguments. A fifth dimension asks whether all actors are free to speak up or whether they are constrained, especially by unwanted interruptions or other intimidations. The last dimension deals with the question whether actors actually mean what they say. This question of truthfulness is most difficult to get an empirical handle on. Crude lies are usually easy to detect, but otherwise the DQI limits itself to the question whether actors *perceive* each other as truthful. Initially, the DQI was developed to study parliamentary debates in Germany, Switzerland, the UK and the US, both for plenary sessions and committee meetings (Steiner et al., 2005). Speech acts in parliamentary debates have a high formality with the chair giving the floor to one actor after another. Thus, parliamentary speech acts have usually a certain length, which allows a scholar to use the DQI to get at the dynamic aspects of a debate. Bächtiger et al. (2009) have done this for a Swiss parliamentary committee that discussed for eight sessions a language bill. They found, for example, that at first many actors told personal stories and that this storytelling diminished over time.

The research situation is very different when we investigate small group discussions that are often characterized with quick gives-and- takes with many shortcuts. Let us look at a hypothetical example: An actor delivers a speech act with a high deliberative quality according to the DQI, giving good reasons for a common good argument. Another actor simply says that he or she supports

the argument, without elaborating in any way. According to the DQI this speech act would get a low score. Yet, with the brief intervention this actor may not disrupt the flow of the discussion. It is exactly in such sequences that lies our research interest. We are interested in the deliberative ups and downs of a group discussion. We want to know how long a discussion stays at a high level of deliberation, when it is transformed to a low level, how long it stays at this low level, and when it is transformed back to a high level. Theoretically, the key question for us is to identify the group dynamic context that leads to upward and downward Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM).

The Concept of Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM)

Let us state more in detail what we mean by Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM). First, it is important to know that the units of analysis are the individual speech acts; each time when an actor intervenes in a discussion we consider this as a speech act. They may greatly vary in length from a single word to long elaborations. We proceed in such a way that for each speech act we select one of the following four categories. Thereby, the second category identifies an upward Deliberative Transformative Moment (DTM), the fourth category a downward DTM.

The Speech Act Stays at a High Level of Deliberation

The situation is easiest if a speech acts fulfils all the criteria of the DQI, which means that the speaker has not interrupted other speakers, justifies arguments in a rational way or with relevant stories, refers to the public good, respects the arguments of others and is willing to yield to the force of the better argument. The discussion, however, can still continue at a high level of deliberation if speakers do not fulfil all these criteria as long as they stay in an interactive way on topic. For our analysis, the concept of *topic* has particular importance, by which we mean a subject matter that has a certain internal consistency. An example of a topic that we encountered in the discussions of Colombian ex-combatants is poverty in the country. As long as a speech act stays within this topic, even if the speech act is brief and not elaborate, the level of deliberation remains high. Our criterion is whether the discussion continues to *flow* in an interactive way on a particular topic with the actors listening to each other with respect. Deliberation also stays high if an actor introduces another topic, giving reasons why the topic is linked with the issue assigned to the group, for the discussion of the ex-combatants the peace process. An actor may, for example, turn the discussion from poverty to corruption, and if the new topic is sufficiently linked to the peace process the discussion continues at a high level of deliberation.

The Speech Act Transforms the Level of Deliberation from High to Low

We use this second category when the *flow* of the discussion is *disrupted*. The topic debated so far is no longer pursued, and no new topic related to the issue assigned to the group is put on the agenda. Topics are mentioned that have nothing to do with the issue assigned to the group and are therefore off-topic. It is also possible that the speech act is so incoherent and confusing that it does

not make sense. Under these circumstances, there is no open space where other actors can easily continue the discussion in a meaningful way.

The Speech Act Stays at a Low Level of Deliberation

We use the third category for speech acts that do not manage to give to the discussion again a direction linked with the issue assigned to the group. The speaker is unable or unwilling to put on the agenda a topic relevant for the issue that the group is expected to discuss. Instead, the speaker brings up topics or stories that are off-topic, or the speech act is incoherent and confusing. The key criterion for this third category is that the speech does not open new windows for the group to talk about the issue assigned to the group.

The Speech Act Transforms the Level of Deliberation from Low to High

Speech acts according to this fourth category are successful in formulating a new topic relevant for the issue assigned to the group. Success means that good arguments are presented why the topic should be discussed. In this way, the speech acts opens new space for the discussion to continue in a meaningful way.

To classify the speech acts according to these four categories, we use a qualitative interpretative approach that has much to do with linguistics, social psychology, and rhetoric. The analysts should have audio- and video recordings and the respective transcripts of the group discussions at their disposal. To come to a good classification decision, the analysts should take their time and consult these tapes and transcripts time and again to get a sense for the context in which a speech act is uttered. Thereby, they should be aware that the same word may have different meanings depending on the group dynamic context. It may matter, for example, whether this word is uttered at the beginning or towards the end of a discussion. Or it may matter in what context this word was used by a pervious speaker. That the interactions among the participants matter for an understanding of what is uttered in a discussion is also emphasized by Goodwin and Heritage (1990) for whom "participants will inevitably display some analysis of one another's actions. Within this framework of reciprocal conduct, action and interpretation are inextricably intertwined … in the real world of interaction sentences are never treated as isolated, self-contained artefacts."

Generally speaking, the analysts should attempt to put themselves in the shoes of the group members. This, of course, can never be done to the full extent, so that the analyses of the individual speech acts will always also reflect the subjectivity of the analysts. With this approach, we are close to Lubensky (2013, p. 66), who analyzed the discussions of the Australian Citizens' Parliament (ACP). The title of his paper already indicates in what direction he wants to go with his analysis: "Listening Carefully to the Citizens' Parliament: A Narrative Account." He wishes "to open a window to the story of the ACP's participants." Lubensky does not claim that he has "a master story from which all interpretations of the ACP should follow, nor (is he) claiming that the story line presented here is the only one." His main point is "that a reflective, storied approach to analyzing the events, based on narrative methods of discourse analysis, provides useful insight into the process and capacities of

participants." This is also what we advocate for the analysis of Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM).

Despite all the subjectivity of the classifications, it is still worthwhile to check the rate of agreement among various analysts. This is what the two authors did for the discussions among Colombian ex-combatants. We classified independently of each other the discussion of an entire group with altogether 107 speech acts; we agreed in 98 of these cases (92 percent), which is a high rate of agreement. This does not mean, however, that we claim an *objective* nature of our analysis. But the high rate of agreement is still comforting, especially because we come from very different cultural, social and political backgrounds, Maria Clara Jaramillo from Colombia, Jürg Steiner from Switzerland.

How new is the concept of Deliberative Transformative Moment (DTM) for the study of discussions in citizen groups? Niemeyer (2002) comes close to the concept, when in his PhD dissertation he writes about "turning points" in deliberation. Carson (2013) reports that a participant in the discussions of the Australian Citizens' Parliament talk about a "transformative" incident, when something unusual had happened, which changed the tone of the deliberation. Thus, it has not yet been widely studied how in a discussion of citizen groups the level of deliberation sometimes abruptly changes from low to high or vice-versa. Outside the deliberative literature, the concept of *catharsis* has some similarities with our concept of transformative moments. It was initially presented by Aristotle in his response to Plato's critics on drama. According to Plato, drama should be closely controlled or eliminated, as it fosters human passions. Aristotle, on the contrary, argued that "dramatic catharsis was necessary, that it purged the audience of pity and terror" (Scheff & Bushnell, 1984, p. 238). In fact, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle argues that "drama tends to purify the spectators by artistically exciting certain emotions, which act as a kind of homeopathic relief from their own selfish passions" (Moreno, 1940). To be relieved from selfish passions fits well the situations when a discussion is transformed to a higher level of deliberation.

An Empirical Illustration of how to Identify Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM)

In a study of discussions among Colombian ex-combatants, we used for the first time the concept of Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM). We use this study to illustrate how the DTM works in the complexities of empirical reality. The Colombian government had a program of decommissioning under way, which applied to combatants of both left guerrillas, in particular FARC[1] and some smaller guerrilla groups and the paramilitary forces at the extreme right. Would ex-combatants, who a short while ago still were shooting at each other, be willing to participate in common deliberative experiments? This was the challenge at the beginning of our research, and it took much patience to ultimately organize 28 experiments with altogether 342 participants. The experiments took all place in 2008. The work in the field was done by Maria Clara Jaramillo and Juan Ugarriza. The latter did his research based on the DQI (Ugarriza, 2014).

[1] Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

Let us first describe the situation of the ex-combatants. In order to get a financial stipend, they were required to participate in a program of the Office of the High Commissioner for Reintegration. Psychologists and social workers acted as tutors, and ex-combatants had to attend twice a month small-group sessions with these tutors. We focused our research on the greater Bogotá area, where there were about 3.000 ex-combatants participating in the reintegration program. They were mostly men, young and with little education. We attempted to select a random sample to participate in the experiments. But there were security problems since many of the ex-combatants were severely traumatized and therefore violent or otherwise troubled. There was also a motivation problem; in a first research phase many ex-combatants invited to the experiments simply did not show up. The tutors helped us with a solution that gave to the ex-combatants the necessary incentives to come to the experiments. They could replace the bi-monthly tutorial sessions with participation in a single experiment and still get the full stipend. It also helped that the experiments could take place in the offices of the tutors. Thanks to the Office of the High Commissioner for Reintegration, we have approximate data about the total population of the 3,000 ex-combatants in the Bogotá area with regard to gender, age, and education. For these criteria, the 342 ex-combatants participating in the experiments correspond roughly to the total population of ex-combatants in the Bogotá area.[2] This is comforting, although we cannot claim that the ex-combatants we studied are a random sample of the total population of ex-combatants.

How large are the ideological differences between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries who volunteered to participate in the experiments? It could have been that the ex-combatants were not ideologically driven but were simply looking for a paying job and did not care which side they joined. This would be fatal for the purpose of our experiments since we are interested to investigate political discussions across deep divisions. It turned out, however, that the ex-guerrillas come much more often from a leftist family background, the ex-paramilitary from a rightist background. Therefore, it was not by random chance on which side the ex-combatants were involved in the internal armed conflict. The clearest indicator for the deep divisions between the two groups comes in response to the question about their attitudes towards the combatants still fighting in the jungles. Although the participants in the experiments had left their former comrades, they expressed a more positive attitude towards their own side than to the other side. The conclusion is that the participants in the experiments formed two distinct groups in a political ideological sense.

Before and after the experiments, participants had to fill out questionnaires about demographic characteristics and political and psychological items. At the beginning of the experiments, the moderators stated the following

[2] Of the ex-combatants in our experiments 15 percent were women, compared with 16 percent among all ex-combatants in the Bogotá area. 30 percent in the experiments were 18 to 25 years old, 37 percent in the Bogotá area. For education we must differentiate between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries. 60 percent of the ex-guerrillas in the experiments had schooling of eleven years or less, 64 percent of all the ex-guerrillas in the Bogotá area. For the ex-paramilitaries the corresponding figures are 41 and 36 percent.

discussion topic: "What are your recommendations so that Colombia can have a future of peace, where people from the political left and the political right, guerrillas and paramilitaries, can live peacefully together?" In contrast to other such experiments, in particular Deliberative Polling (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005), no briefing material was handed out beforehand on the topic for discussion. Also in contrast to Deliberative Polling, moderators did not intervene to encourage deliberative behaviour. It was precisely our research interest to see to what extent ex-combatants were willing and able to behave in a deliberative way without any outside help. Thus, moderators let the discussion go wherever it went.

Given this research design, the consequence was an often quick interactive pattern with many shortcuts, a pattern very different from formalized parliamentary debates. Sometimes, it happened that a participant uttered only a single word. According to the DQI, the discourse quality of such a speech act would be low on most dimensions. From the perspective of Deliberative Transformative Moments, however, it would all depend on the context, in which such a word is uttered. Here is an example, where the utterance of a single word helped the discussion to continue to flow at a high level of deliberation. Arturo, an ex-guerrilla, uttered the single word *rehabilitation*. What was the context in which this word was uttered? The group had addressed the issue of what to do with rapists. At first, the options of death penalty, life in prison and castration were considered. Then, Bernard, an ex-paramilitary, suggests that rapists should not be punished but should be helped to change their behavior. It is this suggestion of Bernard, to which Arturo reacts with the word *rehabilitation.* What is Arturo attempting to accomplish with this one-word intervention? Given the context, Arturo gives Bernard a helping hand in telling the group that what Bernard suggests goes under the technical term of *rehabilitation*. With this helping hand, Arturo clarifies for the group what Bernard suggests. Up to the intervention of Arturo, the discussion on rapists had flowed at a high level of deliberation. Did Arturo disrupt the high level of deliberation in limiting himself to a single-word utterance? This was not the case, because his helping hand in clarifying what Bernard meant allowed the discussion to continue to flow on a more solid basis of knowledge. Coding the one-word speech act of Arturo with the DQI would have given the impression that the level of deliberation had sharply dropped. According to our interpretation, however, uttering the word *rehabilitation* did not at all disrupt the flow of high deliberation but fitted well into its flow. This example should demonstrate why for the current research we do not use the DQI but turn to the DTM.

Personal Stories as Illustration of a Mechanism to Trigger Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM)

We use personal stories as an illustration of a mechanism to trigger Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM). We chose this focus because personal stories have gained increased attention in the deliberative literature and are discussed in a controversial way. Another reason for this choice is that we have found quite many situations where personal stories triggered Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM).

For Habermas (1992, p. 370), arguments need to be justified in a rational, logical and elaborate way. Assertions should be introduced and critically assessed through "the orderly exchange of information and reasons between parties."[3] The arguments must have intrinsic characteristics that make them compelling to others (Habermas, 1983, p. 97). "Communicative action refers to a process of argumentation in which those taking part justify their validity claims before an ideally expanded audience" (Habermas, 1996, p. 322) As a normative standard, Habermas (2008, p. 157) explicitly excludes narratives and images as deliberative justification.[4] There is controversy in the deliberative literature about this focus of Habermas on rationality in the justification of arguments.

Krause (2008) challenges the rational orientation of Habermas in a forceful way. Starting from David Hume, she asserts that Habermas and theorists like him put too much emphasis on rationality, and that more attention should be given not only to stories but to sentiment and passion in general. She argues that "deliberation, as Hume conceives it, is not devoid of intellect, but it involves more than merely intellect. The process of practical reasoning is a holistic one, in which cognition and affect are deeply entwined" (Krause, 2008, p. 103). From this Humean position, Krause criticizes Habermas for being insufficiently aware that all reasons also have an affective element. To demonstrate that pure rationality is impossible, Krause (2008, 20) refers to neuroscience and approvingly quotes Antonio Damasio, whose research suggests that "the cool strategy advocated by Kant, among others, has far more to do with the way patients with prefrontal damage go about deciding than with how normals usually operate." For Krause (2008, p. 118) "expressions of sentiment can contribute in valuable ways to public deliberation even when they do not take an explicit argumentative form." She sees a great range of emotional expressions with the potential of having a moral dimension: "By allowing informal, symbolic, and testimonial types of deliberative expressions, it can enrich citizens' reflection on public issues and thereby improve public deliberation. Such expressions are also tremendously important for the cultivation of moral sentiment" (Krause (2008, p. 122).

Black (2008) also sees great potential in storytelling to enhance deliberation; for her "the study of stories offers a discourse-centered approach that can help scholars focus attention on interactions that hold dialogic potential … stories encourage listeners to understand the perspective of the storyteller. In this way, storytelling can provide group members with an opportunity to experience presence, openness, and a relational tension between self and other" (Black, 2008, p. 109). For Black, stories "potentially have positive influences on deliberative discussion by helping group members participate in a sense of shared collective identity and seriously consider the views and values of their fellow group members" (Black, 2008, p. 109). Like Krause, Black criticizes the one-sided emphasis of Habermas on rationality; she agrees

[3] „den geregelten Austausch von Informationen und Gründen zwischen Parteien".
[4] „nicht diskursive Ausdrucksformen wie Narrative und Bilder".

with "many contemporary deliberative scholars (who) point out the limitations of the theory's rationalist tradition" (Black, 2008, 110).

Like Black, Ryfe (2006, p. 75) emphasizes the role of stories for identity formation, "participants tell stories to establish an identity appropriate to the situation at hand." Another author who stresses the importance of storytelling for the construction of collective and individual identities is Hsieh (2004). Ryfe makes another important point that "stories also help participants instill civility and friendliness in their conversations" (Ryfe, 2006, p. 79). He justifies this argument that "instead of disagreeing directly with the claim of others, participants express initial agreement and then use stories to imply disagreement" (Ryfe, 2006, p. 80). To support this argument, Ryfe reports a discussion sequence in one of the National Issues Forums: "To make this point directly would have been to violate important conversational rules of politeness. Such directness would have threatened the first discussant's public face and, to the extent that it seemed unfair, impolite, or aggressive, made the claim less persuasive. By expressing disagreement in story form, the participant avoids this consequence" (Ryfe, 2006, p. 80).

Polletta and Lee (2006) add the perspective of disadvantaged groups when they argue that "storytelling is able to secure a sympathetic hearing for positions unlikely to gain such a hearing otherwise… These assets are especially important for disadvantaged groups insofar as their perspectives are more likely to be marginal to mainstream policy debate" (Polletta & Lee, 2006, p. 718). More generally, Polletta and Lee argue that stories' creation of an alternative reality makes it possible for audiences to identify with experiences quite unlike their own while still recognizing those experiences. Stories' dependence on a cultural stock of plots enables storytellers to advance novel points of view within the familiar form of canonical storylines. Stories' openness to interpretation encourages tellers and listeners to collaborate in drawing lessons from personal experience" (Polletta & Lee, 2006, p. 718).

Nanz (2006) agrees that personal stories can also serve as justification when she writes that public debate should allow expressing one's identity and speaking with one's voice. In doing so, one would not only put an issue on the agenda but also express an opinion. More specifically, Nanz argues: "By underlining the conceptions of critical/rational discourse, Habermas neglects the extent to which public communication does not consist in argumentation aiming at consensus, but involves questions of individual interest, social and cultural recognition, power, prestige, etc. Participation in public debates is not simply a matter of formulating contents but also of being able to speak in one's voice; thereby, simultaneously enacting one's socio/cultural identity through specific expressive modes or rhetorical features" (Nanz, 2006, p. 36).

Morrell (2010) adds the argument that personal stories are valuable even if they do not lead to agreement: "If narrative or testimony opens people up to other perspectives, even if they do not then agree with those perspectives, then narrative and testimony can serve an important function by clarifying what

different people believe is at stake in deliberation. For example, those opposed to same-sex marriage may never agree that it should be legal, but they may reach a better understanding of what is at stake in the issue after listening to the narratives of same sex couples and the difficulties they face in society" (Morrell, 2010, p. 142). Morrell adds that personal stories have value in themselves. In this way, he takes a counter-position to Dryzek (2009), who argues that personal stories are only relevant for deliberation if they are connected to general issues. But if they do so, Dryzek is all in favor of personal stories when he writes: "deliberation can be open to a variety of forms of communication, such as rhetoric, testimony (the telling of stories), and humor. Real-world political communication generally mixes these different forms, and those that do not involve argument can be effective in inducing reflection" (Dryzek, 2009, p. 1381). Mansbridge is another voice speaking in favor of personal stories for deliberation: "Stories can establish credibility, create empathy, and trigger a sense of injustice, all of which contribute directly or indirectly to justification" (2010, p. 67).

Claudia Landwehr is also sympathetic to storytelling, but cautions that "we have to be careful to consider in how far we can embrace rhetoric and storytelling without giving up what is essential to deliberation: the give-and-take of reasons."[5] She also warns that "narratives can be highly manipulative, and it is difficult to assess their truth. Even if the storytellers are not exactly lying, they may be exaggerating, playing with the audience's emotion." Therefore, "further empirical research is required to find out what the effects of storytelling are, who benefits if we allow storytelling to play a considerable role in discourses." And she hypothesizes "that those who do better at arguing will also do better at storytelling." In a similar way, Hansen (2004, p. 121) is critical of making storytelling a key part of deliberation. He acknowledges that stories may "help establish an intersubjective understanding of the situation. Narratives may also evoke sympathy and reveal the sources of the participant's values, which may serve to explain the underlying premises of a participant's opinion." But like Landwehr, Hansen warns that emotional personal stories may be "strongly manipulative." Black agrees that "not all stories will lead to dialogic moments. Although stories hold the potential for identity negotiation and perspective taking, these features are accomplished in interaction, and it stands to reason that they will not always be achieved …. On their own, stories are not necessarily dialogic—simply sharing one's experiences does not guarantee a dialogic interaction" (Black, 2008, pp. 109, 111). Stromer-Galley (2007, p. 19) is concerned that personal stories may lead to "a high amount of off-topic talk."

This controversial debate in the literature shows that the role of personal stories for deliberation is indeed an important topic. In the context of the present paper, we wish to demonstrate how personal stories can help to transform a group discussion from a low to a high level of deliberation. We will also show cases where personal stories caused transformative moments

[5] Personal communication, March 10, 2010.

from high to low levels of deliberation. For this analysis, we have selected six groups among the 28 groups of ex-combatants that we have studied.[6] We selected the six groups so that they vary with regard to composition and with regard to the end point of the discussion. With regard to composition we selected two groups with a majority of ex-guerrillas, two groups with a majority of ex-paramilitary and two groups with a roughly equal distribution. With regard to the end point of the discussion, we selected two groups where no decision was required, two groups that had to make a unanimous decision and two groups with a majority decision. When there was more than one group fitting a specific category, we used a random process to choose the group to be analyzed. For these six groups we identified a total of 60 Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM), 30 upwards and 30 downwards. The two authors did all the analyses themselves, and this in close collaboration (Jaramillo, 2014). As already mentioned in the previous section, for one group we did the analysis independently of each other and reached a high rate of agreement. The readers may attempt to do their own classifications; the audiotapes in Spanish and the English transcripts are available by the authors (for security reasons the ex-combatants were not willing to be video-taped). In this way, our entire research process with the DTM is transparent.

In the six groups, there were altogether seven situations where a personal story triggered an upward DTM and five situations where the opposite happened. As illustrations we present two cases of each category.[7] By a personal story we mean a statement where a participant recounts events in his or her life; these events may or may not be told in chronological order; furthermore, they may or may not be related to the issue under discussion. A personal event is also included in our definition when it is not related to other people, but recounts, for example, a lone experience in nature or the suffering from an illness. With this broad definition, we capture any situation where a participant brings something personal into the discussion.

Two Cases of Upward Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM)

Ernesto, an ex-paramilitary, triggered one such transformative moment. The other was triggered by Carmen, an ex-guerrilla,.

The Story of Ernesto

As in all groups, the moderator put the following question for discussion: "What are your recommendations so that Colombia can have a future of peace, where people from the political left and the political right, guerrillas and paramilitaries, can live peacefully together?" When Ernesto spoke up, the discussion had dragged on at a low level of deliberation. Arturo, an ex-guerrilla, had transformed it to this low level, when he addressed complex issue of power and social stratification that went intellectually over his head. It did not make sense when he states that "when we cannot reach agreement is

[6] For the analysis of all 28 groups based on the DQI see besides Ugarriza (2014) also Steiner (2012).

[7] The set of all cases of personal stories and other mechanisms that trigger DTM's will be presented in a book-length publication that will include also corresponding data from Brazil and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

when power comes, and power destroys everything." He then continues that "the social pyramid according to Kelsen, an Austrian author, is divided in three groups, the lower or working class, the middle class and the upper class, which is the minority." Arturo does not elaborate on this quote, and does not link it to the Colombian peace process. Fernanda, also an ex-guerrilla, picks up the topic of social stratification, claiming that "here in Colombia, everything is stratified, absolutely everything is classified. Everywhere you go, in school, in university, even in the groups we used to belong we were stratified." Fernanda also does not link her statement to the peace process. Thus, the discussion meanders along without any clear direction. With the following personal story Ernesto helped to transform the discussion back to a high level of deliberation:

> That is one of the things I used to say when I was young, I said, well, if I am Colombian, I am able to go everywhere I want. Later, when I started to live with the conflict, I realized that there were places where people would tell you "go away from here, we don't know you". You knew that you were in danger. When I came to Bogotá, I was with a cousin and a friend of mine in one of the northern and wealthy neighborhoods; we were kind of lost. Then the police came, at first they asked us what we were doing; as my friend couldn't respond, at the end the police said they didn't want to see us around anymore, because neighbors had called to let them know that there were some strange and suspicious people and they didn't want you here. Stratification, as he says (referring to a previous speaker), is indeed something legal, juridical, and it does refer to the fact that some people can't afford to pay the same as others. What I feel is what you said about stratification is more than levels 1, 2 or 3 of a scale; it is discrimination, that is the hard thing.

This story is relevant for a discussion among ex-combatants about the peace process in Colombia. Ernesto begins the story with his optimistic expectation that when he was young he could go anywhere in the country. He felt that as a Colombian he was not discriminated. Ernesto then continues that later in life, in the context of the civil war, he had to learn that unfortunately discrimination existed in Colombia and that he encountered this at a very personal level. He illustrates this claim with a story about a bad experience that he had in a wealthy neighborhood in Bogotá. Because he, his cousin and his friend looked suspicious, wealthy neighbors called the police to chase them away. Ernesto characterizes this episode as putting them in danger, because they were anxious not knowing what the police would do with them. This story is relevant for the peace process, because Ernesto can show to the other participants that there are huge social and economic inequalities in Colombian society. More specifically, he can show how ex-combatants in particular suffer under these inequalities. Through his story, Ernesto tells the other participants that these inequalities are not just a legal concept with abstract levels on a scale like 1, 2, 3, but something that is revealed in everyday life as real

discrimination. Ernesto does not explicitly link such discrimination to the ongoing civil war, but he tells his story in such vivid terms that it is implicitly clear that such inequalities are a major obstacle on the way to peace. Discrimination of ex-combatants is particularly damaging for the peace process, because their successful reintegration into society is a key pillar of the governmental peace plan. If ex-combatants are dissatisfied with their situation, they may go back to fight in the jungle, as many have already done. All this shows that the story of Ernesto touched an important nerve in the peace process. His story helps to make the argument that discrimination of the ex-combatants and more generally of the large masses of poor people has to be overcome if there is any chance for peace.

The story of Ernesto triggers another story told by Bernardo, also an ex-paramilitary. In an interactive way, he follows up on the discrimination of ex-combatants:

> My case was in Cartagena, in a neighborhood like the north here in Bogotá, where a group of demobilized had been placed, people started to appear in the news, stating they wanted us out because their kids were in danger.

Bernard reports that he was stationed with other ex-combatants in Cartagena and that it was reported in the media that the local people wanted them out because they worried for the safety of their children. This is an even harsher story of discrimination because it was articulated in the public eye, and the presence of the ex-combatants was not only presented as a nuisance like in Bogota but as a danger to the local children. These two stories brought the discussion back to a high level of deliberation, opening space to address the peace issue on a broad basis. Ex-guerrilla Arturo, who was incoherent in his previous speech act, now is able to go to the heart of the peace process, so that also for him the discussion is back on track:

> I have a question for everyone. We all represent different families, different people, different localities, different cities, different identities, and the question here is how we can all, poor and rich people, paramilitaries, guerrillas, demobilized, everybody contribute to live together in peace?

Arturo as an ex-guerrilla picks up the discussion from the two stories of the ex-paramilitaries and invites everyone to think of contributions for a successful peace process. He acknowledges that they come from very different backgrounds but claims that this is all the more reason to find common ways to peace. In showing respect for all and referring to the common good, Arturo fulfills important criteria of good deliberation.

How did the story of Ernesto, followed by the story of Bernard, help to transform the discussion back to a high level of deliberation? The stories helped the group to take a perspective on their common discrimination as ex-combatants, irrespective whether they come from the side of the guerrillas or

the side of the paramilitaries. In this way, the stories helped the group to develop a common life world in the sense of Habermas (1981, 208). On this basis, Arturo referred in a respectful way to the common interest of all, paramilitaries and guerrillas, poor and rich, rural and city dwellers, people with different family backgrounds and different identities. The stories were on topic and vivid enough to raise the interest of the other participants.

The Story of Diana

The next story comes from Diana, an ex-paramilitary. Just before she spoke, Felipe, an ex-guerrilla, had used very vulgar language, stating that a high society woman of Bogotá should get a big kick in her ass. With such vulgar language, Felipe violates rules of good manners, an aspect stressed by Warren (2006). This does not mean that deliberation requires manners in a conventional way, but it means that vulgar language is not compatible with good deliberation. Therefore, Felipe disrupts the flow of high deliberation, changing the tone of the discussion to a low level. His intervention does in no way advance the discussion on the peace process; it is completely off-topic. After Felipe had finished, Diana changes the topic and with the following story is able to transform the discussion back to a high level of deliberation.

> We demobilized because we wanted to leave that way of life. And we wanted to be with our families. But, it is not… Being demobilized is a total stigmatization.

This story is much shorter than the story of Ernesto. Diana gives reasons why they were demobilized and complains that the demobilized suffer under stigmatization. While Ernesto put his story in the first person singular, Diana uses the first person plural. She states … **we** demobilized …. **we** wanted to leave that way of life … **we** wanted to be with **our** families. To whom does she refer with this first person plural? Diana does not make it explicit, but from the context it is clear that she refers to both ex-paramilitaries and ex-guerrillas in the group. In stressing the first person plural, she creates a common life world in the group. She assumes that all participants wanted to leave the way of life as combatants in the jungle and wanted to join their families. She also assumes that all participants are stigmatized when people learn that they are ex-combatants.

How effective is this story of Diana in its briefness? Ernesto in his story was effective in showing in vivid detail how they were chased away from the affluent neighborhood in Bogota. For Diana's story, one should consider that all participants in the group shared the same experience as combatants in the jungle, whether they came from the guerrilla or the paramilitary side. So it was not necessary for Diana to characterize what she meant by the way of life in the jungle. She could leave it to the imagination of each listener to remember what this life looked like. Using briefness as a rhetorical tool may have been a powerful way to let the other members of the group remember of how brutal life in the jungle was. This rhetorical tool may also have worked with the brief reference of Diana to go back to family life. Here again, it was not necessary

to give her personal story of her pleasure to be reunited with her family. The participants in the group could easily remember how they enjoyed meeting their family again, in particular because in Colombia extended family life has great importance.

We conclude that the briefness of Diana's story was an excellent rhetorical tool to catch the attention of the group. Comparing the structures of the stories of Ernesto and Diana shows that depending on the context and the content of the stories different rhetorical tools may be effective. Ernesto wanted to show how cruel discrimination can be in a concrete situation. Diana's goal was to allude to the beauty of family life in contrast to life as combatant in the jungle. As in the case of Ernesto, the story of Diana triggered also another story, by Gabriela, like Diana an ex-paramilitary:

> If they know you are demobilized, they don't rent you a room; they won't offer you a job.

Gabriela builds upon Diana's claim that ex-combatants are discriminated and offers two practical examples of how difficult it is for the demobilized to lead a normal life, to find a place to live and to find a job. Ex-paramilitary Belisario continues with a personal story in a metaphorical sense:

> We are discriminated against. Sincerely, we demobilized are put like ten meters under the soil… Wherever you go, wherever you go.

The metaphor of Belisario means that he feels so much outside society that it is for him like living under the soil. And this feeling he has wherever he goes. After Gabriela and Belisario added more stories about discrimination, Diana comes back with the following statement:

> If we are talking about how the groups from the left and from the right will live in peace. That was the key question. That is difficult. That is very complicated.

Diana goes back to the key issue of the peace process, how groups of the left and the right can live together in peace. She acknowledges that making progress in the peace process will be difficult and complicated. Diana does not claim that she has ready-made answers, which is in a deliberative spirit, because it leaves open space for others to speak up. Expressing uncertainty in a difficult situation like the peace process in Colombia reveals respect to what other participants have to say. With Diana's speech act, the discussion is definitively back on track on a high level of deliberation.

How did Diana's story, followed by the stories of Gabriela and Belisario, transform the discussion back to a high level of deliberation? As with Ernesto's story, here, too, the stories helped the group to take a common perspective on their discrimination as ex-combatants. In neither case were proposals made of how to overcome such discrimination. But the issue was put on the agenda of the group and its urgency for the peace process was made clear, because if ex-combatants would continue to be discriminated in a harsh

way, many of them would go back to fight into the jungle, which would put the program of decommissioning and integration of the combatants in severe danger. The two examples of upward Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM) show how stories allow important issues to be put on the agenda. To find solutions for such issues, however, stories would not be sufficient but would need to be supplemented with the exchange of rational arguments in the sense of Habermas (1996).

Two Cases of Downward Deliberative Transformative Moments (DTM)

We now continue with two cases of transformative moments from a high to a low level of deliberation. One triggered by a personal story of Hernando, an ex-guerrilla, the other by a personal story of Belisario, an ex-paramilitary.

The Story of Hernando

Before Hernando told his story, ex-paramilitary Gloria had transformed the discussion to a high level of deliberation in arguing that "the basics will be equal rights; when equal rights exist for everybody, there is an opportunity." In the same speech act, she also proposes "a pact, in which they would give us a postgraduate education." These are concrete proposals of how to improve the situation of the ex-combatants, which would help in the peace process, for which the successful reintegration of the ex-combatants is crucial. Instead of picking up on the proposals of Gloria, Hernando complains about the demobilization program and then tells his story.

> The demobilization program was presented, oh well! But what happens then? They promised one thing, and when we're already here they don't do what they told us they would, for example myself. I've been demobilized for almost three years (…) the military card (…) what happened? From there I even appeared in a jail in Picaleña for some crimes I had committed over there.

Beatrix, another ex-guerrilla, responds to this jail story with the following question:

> You mean you have not yet been cleared?

Hernando answers:

> Well, right now, it took me around the issue of life imprisonment, and I don't know what. I have to go to (…) until you are not (…) they are not going to find a solution for us.

Hernando begins his story in a way that could have been of interest to the other participants. He informs them that he has been demobilized for almost three years, which is longer than for most ex-combatants. So the group would have been interested to learn from Hernando how things stand after such a long time of demobilization. He mentions that he got a military card, which means that he was enrolled in the regular Colombian military. This was not an exceptional situation for ex-combatants. One must know, however, that many

of them were forced to enroll with illegal means. Hernando does not say how he joined the military and what his experience was in the regular armed forces. He continues his story in telling the group that he committed some crimes and was put to jail. Again, he withholds from the group what exactly happened, which crimes he committed and what was his experience in jail. Beatrix, also an ex-guerrilla, asks him in a respectful way whether he has not yet been cleared. The context of the question is that the Colombian government makes a distinction for ex-combatants between military actions and ordinary crimes. For ordinary crimes they were persecuted like everyone else. Thus, Beatrix wanted to know whether Hernando was cleared from ordinary crimes. He is taken aback by this question not knowing how to answer and rambling along. The group only learns that he has not to go for life in prison, but otherwise Hernando does not give any further information of what happened to him in the almost three years since his demobilization.

When Hernando spoke up, the conversation did flow at a high level of deliberation. Why did his story not help to keep the conversation at this high level but transformed it down to a low level? Since Hernando had a long experience of being decommissioned, his story had the potential to tell the group much about the process of reintegration. The group could have learned from him how the government differentiates for ex-combatants between military actions and ordinary crimes. The group also could have learned whether joining the regular armed forces was a good option for ex-combatants to be reintegrated into society. Hernando did not give any useful information about these two questions, neither on the process of reintegration in general.

His story lacked specifics and was not related in any intelligible way to the peace process. Thus, the story did not open space to discuss the merits of the governmental program of reintegration. Yet, the success of this program is key to the peace process. If the program is not successful, combatants in the jungle will be reluctant to join the program and many ex-combatants will leave the program going back to fight in the jungle. After the story of Hernando was unsuccessful to open space for an in-depth discussion of the program of reintegration, the group did not insist that Hernando gives more details of his story but turned to other matters. The case of Hernando shows that Krause (2008, 61) is correct when she warns that personal stories may also have a detrimental effect on the quality of deliberation and that one should "distinguish between deliberative and nondeliberative forms of expression." The story of Hernando was clearly a nondeliberative form of expression, not adding anything substantial to the discussion on the peace process.

The Story of Belisario

Before ex-paramilitary Belisario told his story, Diana, also a paramilitary, had transformed the discussion to a high level of deliberation. She raises the question whether legally ex-combatants as a group could claim to be a minority and thus get more rights. Generally speaking, she asks for more equality in Colombian society, and to reinforce her argument she says that she knows someone in Bogotá, who is rich enough to own six cars. With her call

for more equality Diana stays on topic since the large inequality in Colombian society is an obstacle in the peace process. Belisario then tells his long personal story.

> Another thing… I once had a problem at the Coast, and sometime afterwards I came here. There was an order to capture me and they said I had to go back. The police came into my house and destroyed everything, mistreated my mother-in-law. I came here since we are supposed to have here the right to legal advice and when I came, they assigned me a lawyer, a thin guy, and when I came to see him, he just told me you have to do this and that and you have to go to the People's Attorney's Office. That is what he told me. Here, at this very same table.[8] And that shouldn't be so. That was what I told him. I told him that I had all my papers in order; it is not that I am doing anything wrong, I have all those papers. And what did he say? Look, my brother, what happens is that you have to go yourself (to the Office of the People's Attorney). I can only give you advice. He tried to explain, but I didn't listen since I was already so angry and I better left. He could have said, you know I can't go right now, but come back next week and I will go with you. That was the logical thing to do. Do you understand me? He just said, go straight, and turn right, there is a red door. That shouldn't be so. Each day you feel more regret of having joined this program.

The crucial part of this story is the last sentence, where Belisario expresses his regret of ever having demobilized and joined the program of reintegration. In what precedes, he gives reasons for this regret. In contrast to Hernando in the previous story, Belisario gives a vivid description of how it is for him to be an ex-combatant in Colombian society. He begins by telling the group that he comes from the Pacific Coast, a very poor part of Colombia. Hoping to have a better life, he moved to Bogotá, but here things got even worse. He describes in blunt details how he was mistreated by the police and threatened to be sent back to the Coast. Belisario claims that he has done nothing wrong and that his papers are in order. Like Hernando in the previous story, Belisario had to prove with his papers that he was cleared of having committed any crimes. When he arrived in Bogotá the police had doubts in this respect. Because such doubts existed, Belisario was assigned a governmental lawyer who, however, was not helpful. Instead of advising Belisario, he referred him to the Office of the People's Attorney. The brutal behavior of the police and then the unhelping hand of the assigned lawyer upset Belisario very much. As a rhetorical devise, Belisario tells the group how the lawyer should have properly behaved. To reinforce his story, he asks the group whether they have understood him. All in all, Belisario tells in a forceful way how he was badly treated by the government authorities and that he should have continued fighting in the jungle. This story with its despair did not open space to talk

[8] As we remember from the empirical section, the groups met in offices of the tutors, and as Belisario claims his meeting with the lawyer took place at the same table where now the group meets.

further about the peace process. According to Belisario, the governmental program of decommissioning and reintegration was a failure so that the civil war would continue and it would be pointless to talk about peace. Although in this particular case, despair transformed the discussion from high to a low level of deliberation, one can also envision situations where the despair brings out struggles that the group as a whole has to deal with. Generally speaking, however, expressions of despair are negative for deliberation. The deliberative model is based on some optimism in the sense that actors see hope that a solution to the issue under discussion can be found. Otherwise it would be pointless to participate in the discussion. In the story of Belisario despair is expressed in such extreme form that he regrets having stopped fighting. Given such despair it is pointless to talk about peace.

As the next speaker after Belisario, Felipe, an ex-guerrilla, further illustrates how badly ex-combatants are treated:

> You have to always fulfill what they say. If not, they fuck you. In other words, if you want to stay in this program, you have to even give up your job. Each day asking for permission to come and bring papers, you lose your job. Backwards!! Aghhh!

Felipe adds his own story about the hustle that ex-combatants have to clear their papers, and that as a consequence of such hustle they do not have the time to keep their jobs. As a rhetorical devise he uses vulgar language to strengthen his story. Diana, an ex-paramilitary, adds to the despair that war will never end:

> In a few words, war is not going to end. There is so much support from Plan Colombia, so much money to buy more arms, to pay professional soldiers, etc., etc., etc., and what happens with the people that are dying of hunger?

When Diana refers to Plan Colombia she means all U.S. support and legislation aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups. When she complains about people dying of hunger, she seems to speak of personal experience with such people and perhaps even of her own experience. Belisario comes back and states again that war will never end.

> It is because war is a business.

This time, Belisario picks up from Diana that too much money is involved in war so that there is no interest in peace.

Why was Belisario's story not successful at keeping the discussion at a high level of deliberation and, instead, transformed it to a low level? In contrast to the preceding story of Hernando it was not the lack of specifics in the story; Belisario indeed told the group in vivid detail how his life of ex-combatant is. Felipe and Diana as the next two speakers did identify with the story of Belisario in adding from their personal experience to what Belisario had told the group. Thereby, it was important that Belisario got support not only from

Diana, like him an ex-paramilitary, but also from Felipe as an ex-guerrilla. In this way, some common life world in the sense of Habermas (1981, 208) developed. This common life world, however, was not conducive to discuss ways to peace, because it was characterized by despair and hopelessness. The story of Belisario lacked optimism in negating that in Colombia there can ever be peace. So why should the group bother to discuss ways to peace? The story of Belisario gave to the group the perspective that in the outside world there was no interest in peace and no interest to treat ex-combatants in a fair and civilized way. Confronted with this perspective, Belisario regretted that he ever was willing to be decommissioned, a statement that implied that many ex-combatants, and perhaps himself, will go back to the jungle to continue the civil war.

Practical Applications

Normatively speaking, a good democratic system needs a mixture of strategic bargaining and deliberation; if we look at the current world, more deliberation is necessary (Steiner, 2012a). How does our research help to increase the level of deliberation? Both working with the DQI and DTM may help. The DQI is most useful at the macro level, where we can investigate, for example, how cross nationally different institutional settings influence the level of deliberation in parliamentary debates or in the media (Steiner et al., 2005). From such research we can then conclude which institutional settings are most conducive to deliberation. We found, for example, that multiple and strong veto points in a political system help deliberation in parliamentary debates. For the media, one may ask, for example, whether public subsidies help or hurt deliberation.

With the DTM we can look at the micro level at the internal dynamic of group discussions. In our view, research with the DTM is even more useful for the practice of deliberation. Facilitators of group discussions can learn how to transform a discussion from a low to a high level of deliberation and how to prevent that the opposite happens. In the present paper we have seen how personal stories can have both a positive and a negative effect. In an upcoming book-length publication we will add more such positive and negative stories, add other mechanisms and expand the database from Colombia to Brazil and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In such deeply divided societies it is particularly important that people learn how to transform political discussions into a positive direction. When we think of countries like Syria and Ukraine one may despair that this will ever happen. Long term, the most fruitful approach seems to us that good illustrations of Deliberative Transformative Moments are made part of the school programs from early age on. In this way, children learn how to discuss with others who have different opinions and values. The ultimate lesson from our research with the DTM is that people can and should learn how to deliberate; it is a skill that can be learned and improved like mathematics and language (Steiner, 2012b).

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